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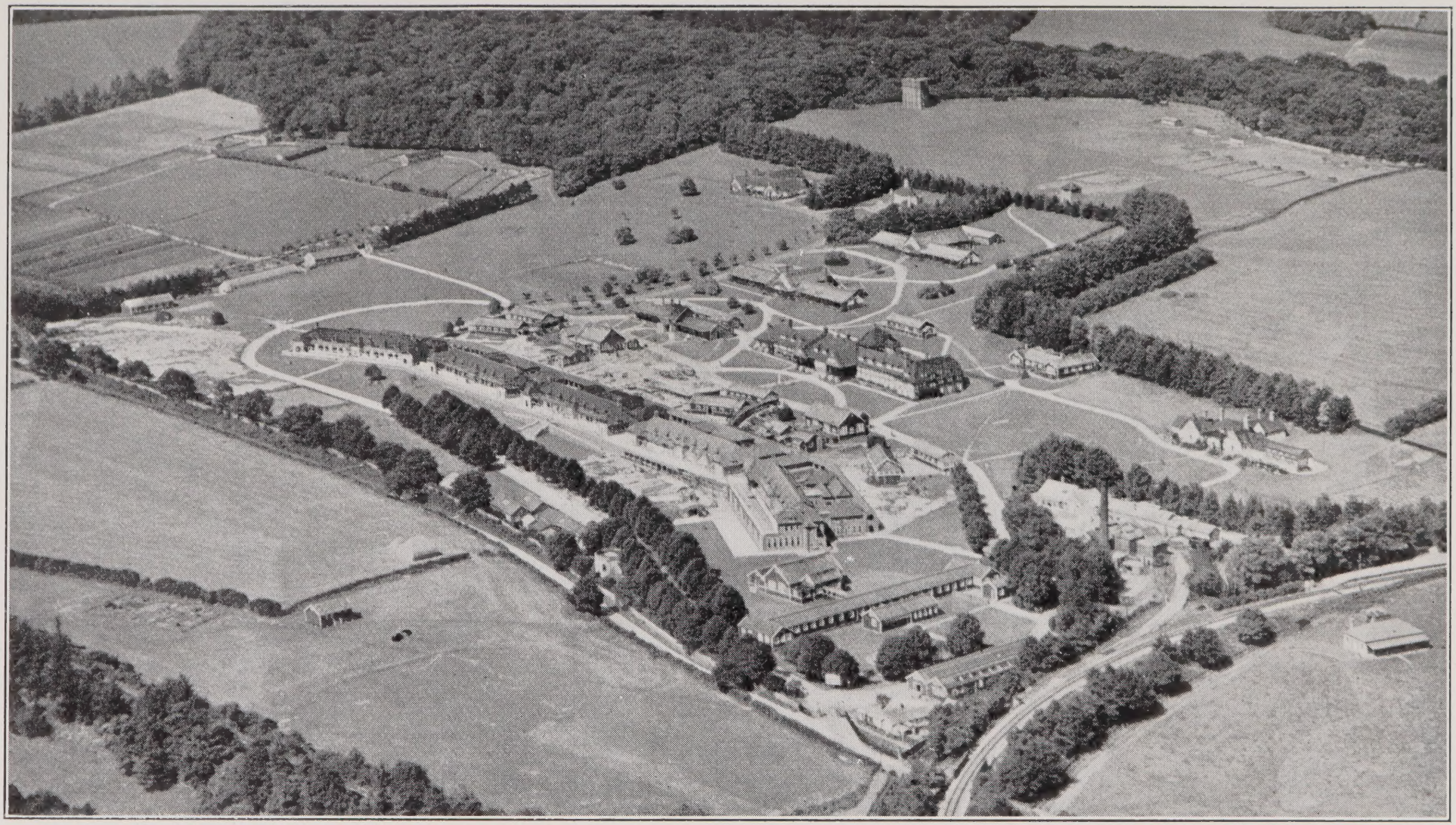
H.R.H. THE DUKE OF KENT, K.G.

ALTON

1908 - 1929 - 1937

The Unconventional Tribute of an Outsider

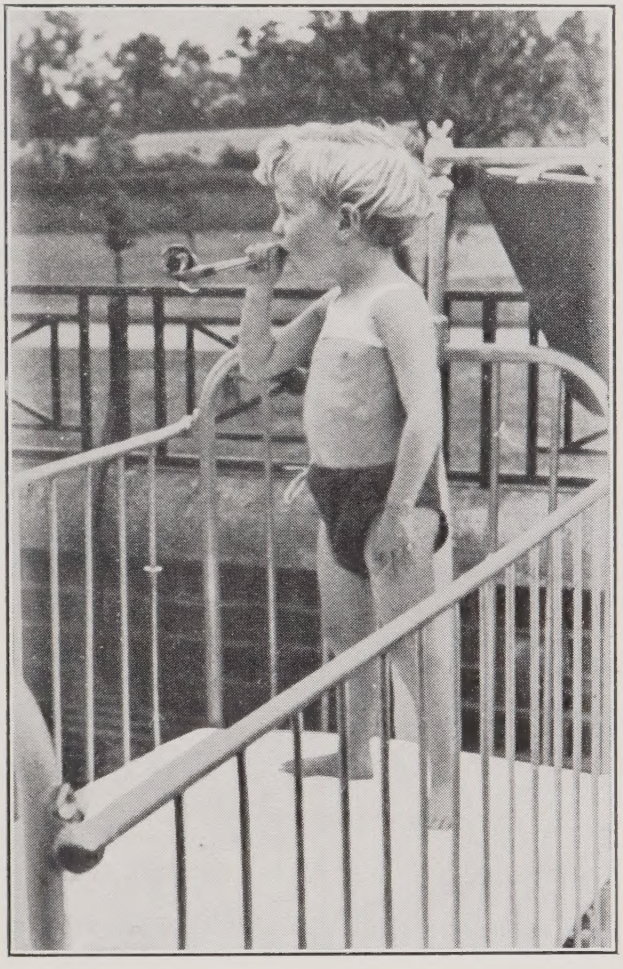
[1937]



Our Alton from the Air.

ALTON

1908 - 1929 - 1937



The Trumpet Call.

WE must make a beginning somewhere, and it seems that on this occasion the best beginning is with the end, so far as our inspiring subject ever can have an end; for Alton is one of those institutions, born of the spirit and of practical sense, which show the promise of endless life.

So to begin with a recent yesterday.

On Thursday, the tenth of June, 1937, the completion of the re-organized and rebuilt Hospital at Alton, founded by Lord Mayor Sir William Treloar some thirty years before, was celebrated by a renewed dedication to its great purpose of curing the deformed crippled children of these islands, and of so strengthening them and through a careful system of education preparing them for the future that they might have every opportunity of becoming useful citizens.

The occasion was the formal opening of the re-built Hospital ; and was celebrated in the Silver Jubilee Treatment Centre by His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, who thereby maintained the royal tradition of sympathy with the Hospital, which had already been generously proved by their present gracious Majesties. They in turn had followed the examples of the seventh King Edward and Queen Alexandra—whose influence on Alton has been exceptional and through her League of Service prosperously continues—and of our late beloved sovereign, King George the Fifth and Queen Mary.

It is most happily appropriate, therefore, that the culminating incident in the rebuilding and re-equipment of the Hospital, as given expression to in June by the Duke of Kent, should be directly associated with his parents ; for the foundation-stone of the new Central Block was laid in the year of their Silver Jubilee, and through bearing that title will remain as a lasting memorial to them.

So on Founders' Day the leaders, workers and well-wishers of Alton assembled to witness the formal opening. The Duke arrived. The National Anthem was played. A golden key was turned ; a royal declaration made ; an episcopal blessing given ; there were cheers ; and the new Hospital, complete—so far—to the last gaiter-button, as the more optimistic quarter-master-sergeants used to say, was launched on its further voyage of usefulness. Was that a mixture of metaphors ?——well, never mind ! The thirty years of service which the Hospital has fulfilled will now be extended to—infinity.

In the Hay.

No limits can be set to the length or quality of its usefulness, and we may well believe that in its active beneficence it will be at work until the Duke's imaginative wish, as expressed in his inaugural address, is realised and through the obliteration of children's diseases " a Hospital of this nature will be superfluous." A dream very far-reaching—as all hopeful dreams that rest on human circumstance must be—yet nothing seems impossible to medical and surgical science, or to human devotion, and the record of the Hospital justifies even so vast a hope as that.

Founded in 1908, and actually the first hospital established to treat and cure tuberculous cripple children, the ravages of " T.B."—that foul disease—have since been so combated and diminished that its ending or all-but-ending is in sight, and for that encouraging reason the efforts of Alton now are not limited to the tuberculous, but are extended to every form of crippling disease in childhood.

The word " cripple " is interpreted in the widest sense, though not to include fevers ; but it does include such diverse troubles as infantile paralysis, cleft palates, webbed fingers, rheumatoid arthritis ; in fact any congenital defects which affect the bony structure and physical poise of the body, as well as facial reconstruction after extensive destruction, as from that odious disease *Lupus Vulgaris*.

A striking example of such courage and readiness in treatment and the success of that venture will be given towards the end of this Tribute.

What a fight against the stubbornness of evil those thirty years have witnessed, and how transformed in consequence the Hospital has become since the two old-fashioned wooden blocks of the Princess Louise Military Hospital, hurriedly set up on the airy and sunlit slopes at Alton for soldiers wounded in the South African War, were by special Act of Parliament entrusted to Sir William Treloar and as speedily as might be adapted to the curative needs of the children !

Towards the end of his life the Founder declared that the realization of his dreams of the future of Alton had outgrown his boldest anticipations—as, indeed, it had. In its present form and completeness of equipment the Hospital must be even further outdoing the expectations of all who worked in those wooden wards, of which a fragment still is standing, as also is the old soldiers' canteen.

Let us hope that something of them may be kept as evidence of what was, and so serve as an encouraging contrast to what is ; for it is very easy in the present success to forget such humble and arduous beginnings, as when, for example, conditions were so raw that rats were a nuisance there, scampering at night-time among the beds, until cats, that had taken refuge in the spaces underneath the wards, gradually overcame them and they disappeared, as afterwards the cats did too.

The Old Wooden Wards.

Every detail of the organization had then to be improvised or invented and elaborated, as it were, on the spot. At the beginning, in 1908, there were only 20 beds, increased by the end of that year to 120 ; and later rapidly to 200.

The Medical Superintendent, the young Dr. Henry Gauvain, fresh from St. Bartholomew's and blessed with the always enlightened but sometimes conveniently blind vigour of the pioneer, had no assistance, other than that of the Matron and the nurses, whose devotion then as ever at the Hospital has been worthy of the best traditions of their most human of the professions. But an additional strength came to him from the counsel of the Honorary Medical Board, which from the first has been a live backbone to the Institution.

The doctor began work early in the mornings, dealing personally with every case, making his diagnoses, performing the operations, preparing the necessary plaster-casts for the jackets and splints to enclose the deformed bodies and limbs and bring the unconscious pressure which in time was to make the shapeless shapely ; working often till after midnight—with the nurses ever cheerfully there, helping to fight the disease that in many ways still was a mystery then—and in the process

In Peter Pan's Garden.

helping to discover those principles of treatment which have brought the most encouraging evidence of the progress of the Healing Science in these days.

It is impossible here for an Outsider not to pay some tribute to those who have combined to realise the success of Alton, although they would themselves have forbidden. It shall be said, because it is an essential part of a stimulating story. Sir Henry Gauvain's achievements at Alton belong not only to the Hospital but to British Curative Science ; and were aided and made possible by the courage and sympathy of the Trustees, and especially in this generation by Colonel the Honourable Frederick Lawson, their Chairman, and Miss Florence Treloar, who has proved a true heir to her father's spirit ; by Mr. Harrowing,

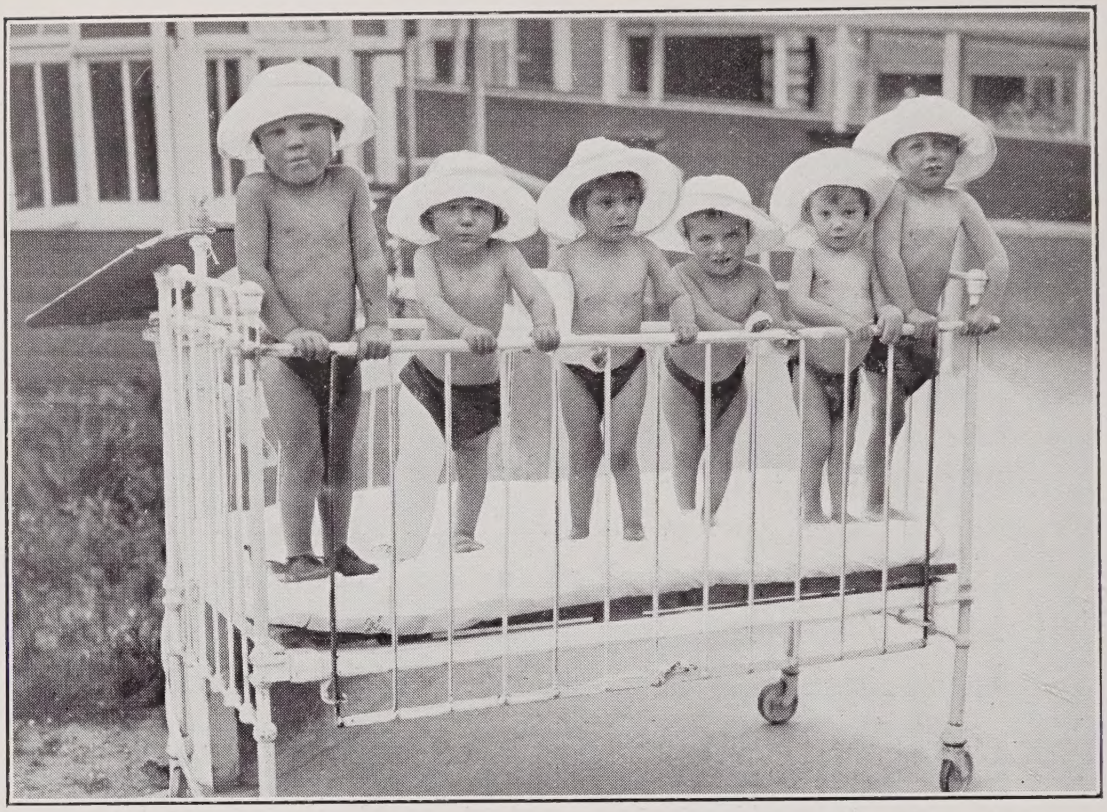
whose Treasurership has been a sort of gold-mine to the Hospital ; by the energetic and ingenious Secretary, Mr. Harper, and his eager assistants ; and, of course, in the greatest prominence possible, by the nursing staff under the successive Matronships of the recently-retired Miss Robertson and the present Miss Holborrow ; with the auxiliaries—the teachers, the outdoor workers, and all else.

The results of their united efforts are now " on view." The Hospital bears its own witness. " Si Monumentum requiris, circumspice ! " The epitaph on the tomb of Christopher Wren in St. Paul's is ever the finest tribute that can be paid to all practical achievement—as it may be at times a pathetic moral to those who have failed. At Alton it can be only a tribute.

For twenty-one years the old wooden wards, with the scattered out-houses, did their work and, meanwhile, were being constantly added to, adapted, improved, renovated, restored, and with the best available instruments re-equipped. Yet they remained stubbornly inadequate.

So to meet the needs of more exacting times and to celebrate the coming-of-age of Alton, a renewed and special effort was determined on, entirely to re-build the Hospital and secure that its instruments and accommodations should be as perfect as thought, experience and money well-spent could make them.

The work was contracted for and begun. It took eight years of almost continuous labour to realise that purpose and practical dream ; and—here is a point worthy of notice—during the whole of that time its 300 beds were in full use. Not one was wasted. Not one child was refused admission because of the reconstructions in hand. Whatever the restrictions and difficulties—and they were many—the curative work went on. " Business as usual " was the motto followed by all concerned in an enlightened spirit.



United We Stand.

Beside the Hospital, in those eight years, a new Kitchen and Dining-room block was built and fitted with the latest electrical apparatus ; the whole electrical supply, even to satisfy the increased calls on its power, being generated on the estate ; and new quarters were constructed for the nursing and domestic staffs.

Then, to complete the design, the Silver Jubilee Treatment Centre was built.

The entire cost of the undertaking was £220,000 and thanks to years of prudence and foresight, to considerate investments and, of course—for they are the most important of all—to the generous contributions of friends in subscriptions, donations and legacies, the whole cost was met without a single penny of debt being incurred. In these years of expensive and almost extravagant public developments, of competing causes, of heavy taxation and commitments and the disastrous world slump, that is not the least of the achievements of Alton.

Out on the Terrace.

A Glimpse of Hayling.

Now comes the hardest part of this happy task, to describe the Hospital—to paint the lily and all that, and such a technical lily!

Two great natural principles govern its applications: they are the graduated open-air life, with its sweetening, strengthening air, and the blessed sunshine; not to forget the advantages added through the sister-branch on Hayling Island, where sixty young patients at any time are gaining health and zest from the sea-bathing and the glow of the sea, that elemental light which brings its own peculiar inspiriting qualities. But the treatment there is rather for the older children than the younger.

We return to the renewed Alton.

The five great red brick-built blocks of the new Hospital span a distance of some thousand feet and have running the full length before them a terrace, twenty-five feet wide, to which the beds of the children who must be recumbent can be wheeled

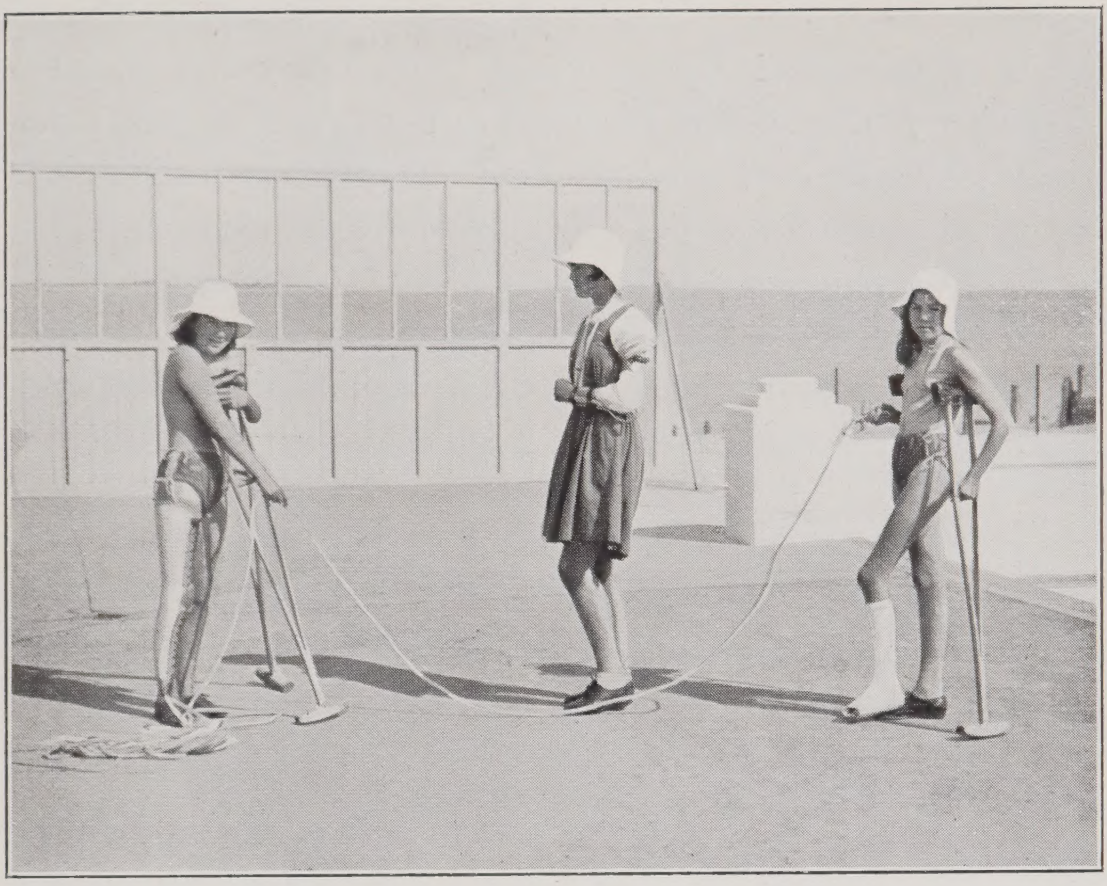
when the weather conditions are suitable. If those conditions are too bad for the patients to lie out-of-doors the open-air treatment may still be enjoyed, for the protected screen-wall dividing the wards from the terrace can be folded back as may be required ; while in windless weather the whole of it can be put aside and the wards brought to the open.

When it is not raining the lower part of the roof may be slid open and so enable the children who through their condition must remain within doors to enjoy the advantages of the air and the light of day. Everything affecting their well-being and comfort has been thought out ; planned with a finish that promises lasting good, not only to them and other inmates of hospitals, but to the general community ; as why should not that gospel of health and common-sense be practised, so far as the conditions permit, in schools and private houses ? As for sure it will be, when the world has grown wiser.

Vita-glass is used in windows, walls and the sliding roof ; and so delicately adjusted by weights is the roof that it can be raised or lowered with little more than a touch. Below it are canvas blinds which may be easily adjusted as the inflow of sunlight or moonlight needs to be checked. Indeed, by such contrivances the elements are so harnessed that they become beneficial without troubling the patients, and so the utmost use is made of the cheerfulness of spirits they bring and their medicinal virtues.

Then to the important matter of control.

Every one of the five wards is so planned that from her office at its centre the Sister in charge can see all her sixty patients, whether they are in the ward and the adjacent framed-off cubicles for cases requiring special concern, or on the terrace. She controls the lighting and is in direct telephonic communication with the hospital exchange, through which she can speak at once with any other department or official in the institution. The convenience of this unified system needs no loud-speaker for its justification.



One moment, please !

With a similar thoroughness the ventilating, heating, lighting and sanitary requirements have been attended to. Although the flooring within the wards is of teak blocks, the paved terrace and the corridor underneath with their connecting ways are of a green artificial stone which at once prevents the feet slipping and avoids glare. Steps lead from the terrace to the ground ; but also there are gradual slopes, ramps, for the use of the children, who, although they can walk, are lame or need crutches. All this means easy progress for the wheeled beds, for the nurses in their work and for the patients in their comings and goings, and illustrates further the thoroughness with which every detail of the Hospital has been thought and worked out.

With the ordinary conditions of its routine life so well-considered, it is obvious that the special necessities of the Hospital's curative work would not be neglected ; and that is so. Inspiration and forethought, based on experience and the research and discoveries of men of science the world over, have been used for that essential.

In the Silver Jubilee Treatment Centre such careful elaboration of organization is especially seen. It is a very centralization of efficiency. Everything possible has been done to reduce the labour of those concerned there to the necessary minimum, so that all care and energies may be given to the children. The whole of the requirements for the work to be done in the Block are kept there, and are, therefore, immediately available ; while through ingenious methods of heating, behind the panels and under the floors, the temperature is kept at an approved level.

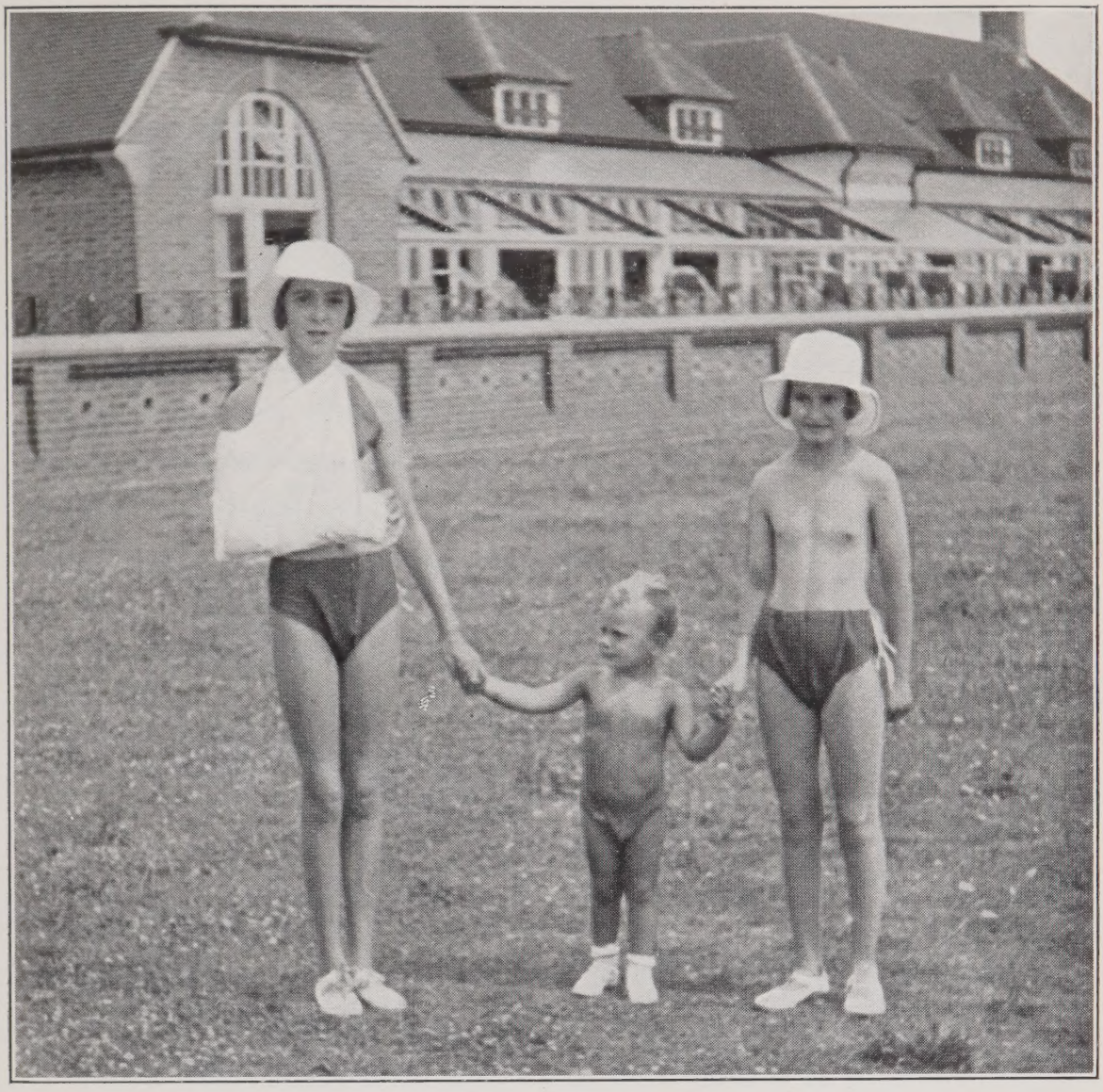
Merely to give the names of the branches of the work done there and in the vicinity of the Central Block is but little-informing ; yet to do justice to its wonders in untechnical speech would surely need the pen of a literary archangel—which not even poets-laureate wield.

There is an operating theatre ; with anæsthetic and sterilizing rooms adjacent ; and so careful are the safeguards against infection that lockers containing the sterilized instruments are arranged to open without touch of hand.

Near this complete and complicated wizard's box of science is the Light-room, unexcelled for completeness, and there on sunless days the patients requiring such treatment can enjoy the solar rays, artificially produced, with other qualities of the light that destroys disease and builds up the vitality of bodies and nerves. This department has been charmingly dedicated to its purpose through a painted ceiling, where, in gradual order from end to end, the dawn, sunrise, the blaze of noon, the softening radiance of sunset and, finally, night and the stars, are depicted, giving a touch of poetry to the practical intenseness of the work there sympathetically done.

There is an X-ray department containing a new stereoscopic apparatus so that the skiagrams showing the bony structure of body and limbs can be studied, as it were, " in the round." Also a fireproof room for the storage of films, as well as a studio for the necessary photographic work, done by Lady Gauvain, and

Within the Ward.



Let Me Guide You.

especially adapted for reclining cases; with photographic records kept of all the children—and highly encouraging they are, as showing the progress made in them often from the apparent hooped hopelessness of crippledom to uprightness and grace; brought through long, patient and considerate treatment in this remarkable workshop of healing.

Associated with those means and efforts to induce the young bodies and limbs to take on the comeliness that is a natural right of childhood, are the plaster, massage and remedial exercise rooms, with a special medicated cruciform bath where a number may sit, often to restore vitality and vigour to limbs that had seemed lifeless; as well as the necessary dressing-rooms,

dispensary and a dentist's room—for the teeth of every child at regular periods are examined and where necessary treated by an expert.

The originality and value of the work done at Alton, now that orthopædic cases other than those which are tuberculous are dealt with, is illustrated by a case at present in the Hospital, and this is the " striking example " earlier referred to. A girl, now two or three years old, was born without a nose. Between eyes, mouth and ears was a smoothness that was bound to be an unpleasant disfigurement throughout her life unless it could be dealt with.

It has been dealt with. Already in careful stages flesh, stiffened (I understand) with wax, in the shape of a nose has been grafted ; and before many months have passed nostrils are to be made and the process of nasal breathing will then be regular and permanent.

There are times when, on viewing the terrible destruction caused by science in war, we must wonder as to whether its inventions on the whole have been justified. Yet justified on the whole assuredly they are, as that example illustrates.

And Alton proves. As was said of Solomon in all his glory, the wonders of the Hospital in its work cannot fully be told. Yet how small is every aspect of material glory—trumpets and gold—when measured with the good—the quietly wrought and lasting good that does not seek for, but rather avoids, applause—as is there revealed.

So far inadequately—as must be—for the results of Alton that are a chapter of national surgical history.

But that is not all the good the Hospital does, for it prepares the children for their future, in basket-making and such other useful crafts. Not only are their minds trained by competent teachers, but within those charmed doors they gain impressions of happiness which surely they cannot forget.

Basket Makers.

Nothing more delighted the Founder at a day's end than from without the Trustees' Lodge to look down on the old Hospital and hear the silver chatter and laughter of the children rising softly in a joyous haze of sound. That happiness is not so audible now on the Trustees' hill, but only because solid bricks and mortar enclose sounds that the old timbered structures let through. The happiness still is there, and will remain there so long as the work in the Hospital is the service of love that it has ever been.

With all the inevitable restrictions of their conditions the children give the clearest evidence of their enjoyment of life ; and it would be strange if it were otherwise. The few casual photographs that illustrate this brief account show how generous are the limits of their interests, their recreations and their play. Hobbies are encouraged. A room is given up to them ; and there, amongst other things of the kind and privileges, may be met (in miniature) such valuable personalities as Mickey Mouse and his creature-companions ; while the children have their own instrumental band which performs with such zest and evokes so much admiration and amusement among its audiences, that I doubt whether the Guards on parade, with all their bearskins, brass and scarlet, or even the Philharmonic at the Queen's Hall at its white-shirtiest concert wouldn't in some respects be a little envious of it.

The children dance and every ward has its radio set, so that the diverse enjoyments of the world—as well as the lessons and lectures given by wireless teachers—may be shared. No wonder the Hospital is a busy institution and as happy as it is busy.

That delightful spirit is everywhere ; the sisters and nurses share it, and so does the domestic staff. In how many institutions elsewhere have the maids their own tennis-court and even an enclosure for sun-bathing? The rights of the servers are recognized and they in turn appreciate their privileges. Such gratitude is at once a measure and a cause of the efficiency all round. Their work goes with cheerfulness and many of the

Sewing in the Sunshine.

domestic staff have been at Alton for many years and look forward to spending the rest of their serviceable life-time there, simply because they love the place.

So far for the Lord Mayor Treloar Cripples' Hospital renewed ; but there is something at Alton yet to speak of, the College and its workshops, where crippled lads are trained in leather-work, tailoring and bootmaking, as well as to be manly in life through playing the games that are an enjoyable discipline.

Once on a time their boxing was admirable, showing a courage, skill and balance remarkable in boys badly crippled as many of them were ; but that pastime is no longer practised. In Cricket they are keen and successful, with three elevens playing neighbouring teams and, more often than not, winning their matches.

One condition required of them before they are taken into training is that they must have the full use of both their hands,

as otherwise, of course, they could not be efficient in their future callings. The results are more than encouraging.

One old boy, though beginning with the heavy disadvantages that attend a cripple, by grit and cleverness and using the effects of his training, has built up a large leather-bag business in London and employs on his staff other old boys from Alton.

Here is another example. A man turned up at the Hospital recently and said he was the first boy put in a plaster-jacket when the Hospital started. On looking up the records that was found to be correct. He was at the Hospital in 1908 with severe tuberculous disease of the spine and was the first lad to be put into a plaster-jacket. He was discharged with the disease cured and has remained well since and without deformity. He is now chef at one of the most important London hotels. Other instances like this may be given. Many old boys and girls have risen to positions of affluence and are leading happy and contented lives through the work the Hospital and College have done for them.

Without the beginning that Alton had given them, what might not their condition be now, and with the many others who more or less were like them—their natural ambitions curbed, their lives embittered, failures, with sadness heavy through frustration in too hard a world. Happily the picture now is otherwise. Through its spirit and methods the College alone has made more than six hundred lads efficient and self-respecting citizens.

And the work of the Hospital and College does not end within their walls. There is an elaborate system of after-care, and old patients may be seen and advised either in London or at the Hospital, or at one of the numerous clinics established by the Hospital, at any time they wish. This privilege is eagerly taken advantage of. Patients who have to leave in splints may have them replaced or remade. They are advised not only as to the

particular ailment for which they were admitted to the Hospital but on any matter in which help can be given.

Through the medium of an Old Boys' Association also, old College boys similarly re-unite and are helped in every possible way either to find work or to improve their positions. Thus the happy influence of the Hospital extends throughout the lives of patients who have been treated there.

Something must be done for the College with its wooden buildings and restricted space—though to call attention to its rights and needs is not a purpose of this paper. Its future can be left to the foresight and sympathy of the Trustees ; but the need is evident . . .

And nothing more now requires here to be said ; though the subject of Alton, because of the greatness of the dream and the infinite details comprised in it and the glory of the results, is as inspiring as can be.

The royal approval so richly given has been very richly justified.

C. E. Lawrence.

P.S.

While I'm about it why not a Postcript? We must have a Postcript and here it is.

These are the names of the Trustees and the other Officers—

TRUSTEES :

The Rt. Rev. and Rt. Hon. The LORD BISHOP OF LONDON, D.D., K.C.V.O.

Miss FLORENCE TRELOAR

The Rt. Hon. The LORD MAYOR OF LONDON

~~Col.~~ MAJOR GENERAL The Hon. FREDERICK LAWSON, D.S.O., M.C. (*Chairman*)

T. J. HARROWING, Esq., C.C. (*Treasurer*) SIR ALEXANDER MACLEAN.

MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT :

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The Secretary

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